United Nations system CEB/2008/7

Chief Executives Board for Coordination

28 August 2008

Report of the High-level Committee on Programmes on its intersessional meeting

(New York, 1 July 2008)

I. Introduction

1. The High-level Committee on Programmes of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) held its intersessional meeting in New York on 1 July 2008. The agenda of the meeting is contained in annex I to the present report.

II. Climate change

2. At the request of the Chairman, the Vice-chairman led the consideration of the item on climate change. He recalled the important work that had been done by the United Nations system in preparing for the United Nations Climate Change Conference, held in Bali, Indonesia, in December 2007, through the High-level Committee on Programmes and its working group on climate change. After the Conference in Bali, further work in the working group, in preparation for the spring session of CEB, had led to the endorsement by CEB at its first regular session of 2008 of a decision on climate change (see CEB/2008/1, para. 59, and CEB/2008/4, annex III). In follow-up, the Secretary-General had made specific suggestions for coordination in the five focus areas and four cross-cutting areas (see annex II) in a letter to CEB members dated 30 May 2008. It was now critical to maintain the commitment to deliver at the United Nations Climate Change Conference to be held in Poznan, Poland, in December 2008.

3. The Vice-chairman thanked the co-conveners of the meeting for their submission of brief notes and draft workplans on their respective areas, as had been requested at an informal meeting of the working group meeting on 28 May 2008. He noted that time did not allow for a detailed discussion of each paper and suggested that instead members of the High-level Committee on Programmes could comment on whether the submitted papers were substantively focused and went in the right direction. He commented that the apparent focus on establishment of inventory and repeated references to coherence might not be sufficient for the conference in Poznan. The Vice-chairman went on to say that the issue of adaptation would be treated separately, given the collective responsibility of the High-level Committee

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for that area. Another item that would have to be discussed was the online inventory of United Nations system activities in the area of climate change.

4. The head of the climate change support team established by the Secretary-General stressed the continuing involvement of the Secretary-General, with the overall objective of reaching a good, ratifiable agreement at the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Copenhagen in 2009. The Secretary-General was working to raise the political profile of the issue and to promote awareness among the general public. He was keen to see the CEB coordination exercise succeed and would continue to lead by example, through making progress on a climate neutral United Nations, the renovation of the United Nations Headquarters, and by offsetting the carbon footprint of his own travel. For the Group of Eight summit and other upcoming activities, the Secretary-General was focusing his messages on the connection among issues such as food security, climate change and the Millennium Development Goals. The work of the United Nations system had to be concrete, focusing on implementation of existing and future agreements and on proactively supporting Governments. It should also result in action at the national level, with United Nations country offices serving as "one-stop shops" for national authorities. This was not an exercise to promote individual United Nations entities, but rather a joint endeavour in support of the climate change agenda. If the system succeeded in the short period leading up to the Poznan and Copenhagen conferences, it could better address the longer-term coordination that was also needed. The statement of the Secretary-General at the Poznan conference would need to highlight not only what was already being done, but also demands that still needed to be met. The work of the United Nations system could also be promoted through collective participation in exhibitions around the world, showcasing projects under the focus and cross-cutting areas.

5. The representative of the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change agreed with the emphasis on implementation, which responded to demands made by parties to the Framework Convention at the sessions of the Conference of the Parties held in June 2008 and expectations they had of the United Nations system. Excellent progress had been achieved at the June sessions on adaptation, ahead of schedule, with the second phase of the Nairobi work programme on impacts, vulnerability and adaptation to climate change having been initiated and a call having been made to United Nations organizations to move ahead with implementation. Moreover, mandates considered by the Expert Group on Technology Transfer had also been agreed, including a call for the secretariat of the Framework Convention to elicit contributions from other organizations. Less progress had been achieved, however, in the negotiations regarding future cooperative action, with States putting concrete, but not yet negotiated, proposals on the table.

6. The representative of the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change added that advancing the implementation agenda was key to unblocking the negotiations, by creating fertile ground and helping States to identify what should be included in an agreement at Copenhagen. There were very concrete mandates for action in all five focus areas of the CEB initiative, which could be fed into the respective working groups to elicit specific responses beyond the initial development of inventory. As, in the end, action was felt at the national level, it was imperative to establish a strong link between the High-level

Committee on Programmes and the United Nations Development Group. The one-stop shop suggested by the previous speaker could be achieved through the work of the High-level Committee, which would then be brought to the United Nations country teams through the Development Group. Eventually, the country teams could provide information to national authorities on who did what within the United Nations system, while at the same time feeding demands at the national level into the system. Another concrete deliverable for the Poznan conference could be a web-based interface dealing with access to funding, which had been requested by the parties to the Framework Convention in June. The secretariat of the Framework Convention wished to work with the CEB working group dealing with financial matters in order to make that happen. This could also be presented by the Secretary-General in Poznan as a short-term outcome leading to longer-term action.

7. The discussion that followed revolved around some key themes, and is described in paragraphs 8 to 16 below.

A. Workplans

8. The submission of workplans by the conveners of the focus and cross-cutting areas (excluding adaptation and the part of the area on supporting global, regional and national action related to national action) was welcomed by participants. At the same time, it was stressed that the next iteration of those workplans should focus more substantively on what was being done in each area, what the gaps were and how they could be addressed, along with the timetables already reflected in most of the papers.

B. The High-level Committee on Programmes and adaptation

9. Concern was expressed by some participants at the apparent division of the work in the area of adaptation into 12 sectors, each with their own convener or conveners. It was suggested that the addition of 12 more areas to the five focus and four cross-cutting ones would complicate the work and the reporting structures. This had been explicitly rejected at previous meetings of the High-level Committee on Programmes. Moreover, it was pointed out that there were adaptation issues that did not fall neatly into any single sector but were cross-sectoral. The World Food Programme (WFP) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) noted the interest of United Nations and other humanitarian agencies to contribute inputs on the humanitarian dimension of climate change through the work of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, which had decided in June 2008 to take a more active role on the issue.

10. The Director of the CEB secretariat presented in greater detail the draft paper on adaptation, noting that the chart with the 12 sectors, which had been distributed as part of the paper, was not meant to introduce 12 additional working groups. He noted that ongoing work was focused on preparing for the conference in Poznan as an intermediate milestone before the Copenhagen conference. It was essential to focus on implementation of existing mandates, among them the Nairobi work programme on adaptation, as called for by the parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. At the same time, the United Nations system should position itself strategically in order to be able to respond to the

outcomes of the ongoing negotiations and should feed into that process, as appropriate, through the secretariat of the Framework Convention. In that regard, areas of possible action could include risk management and risk reduction strategies, economic diversification aimed at building resilience and other areas identified in the Bali Action Plan. The High-level Committee on Programmes needed to find a simple and compelling way to address work under the focus and cross-cutting areas, within the set timetable and while remaining cognizant of the many interlinkages. Similarly, work relating to adaptation would need to take into account mandates and existing coordination mechanisms within various sectors, while avoiding unnecessary complexity. The CEB secretariat would continue to support the working group under the leadership of the Vice-chairman.

11. The representative of the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change drew attention to the specific calls for action on adaptation coming from the parties to the Framework Convention during their meetings in Bonn in June 2008, information on which had been circulated to members of the High-level Committee on Programmes. Some of those calls for action related directly to existing sectors, such as agriculture, while others cut across sectors. Coordination by the High-level Committee of work relating to adaptation could focus on those calls for action, in addition to the results of an analysis of the National Adaptation Plan of Action, thus identifying a number of deliverables by the United Nations system to be considered at Poznan. The Vice-chairman and the Director of the CEB secretariat agreed, noting that in the process of responding to the political imperative the High-level Committee would draw on the important work done by the various United Nations system entities in the various sectors. Thereafter, there was broad agreement on treating the sectors as "feeders" into the process, as proposed by the representative of UNHCR. The approach taken by the High-level Committee to adaptation should be reconsidered in that light.

C. Online inventory and websites

12. The Director of the CEB secretariat referred to the cooperation of his office with the International Institute for Sustainable Development. This had led to the establishment of a new website on climate change geared to the needs of experts and policymakers, enhancing further the visibility of the work of the United Nations system (http://www.climate-l.org). As part of the same project, a bi-weekly electronic bulletin was being issued, with summaries and analyses of major developments and articles by invited guests. The first such bulletin had included an article by the Secretary-General (http://www.iisd.ca/climate-l/clob1.html).

13. The webmaster of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat explained the process for the establishment of the database upon which the online inventory of United Nations system activities on climate change would be built. It would be a United Nations system Extranet application, which would be accessible by all entities. The intention was to have the prototype ready by the end of July 2008 and then conduct tests for a couple of weeks in August. Thereafter, organizations would be invited to input their data. Depending on how quickly that was done, it was expected that the inventory could be relatively complete by early October 2008. Of course, as a living application, it would need to be continuously

updated. It was noted that the content of the inventory would be as good as the data that organizations provided.

D. Work at the country level

14. The secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change offered to go through the National Adaptation Plans of Action, which were currently prepared only for least developed countries, extract what needed to be done in terms of specific sectoral work and feed it into the relevant sectors in the area of adaptation. It was noted that climate change had been placed on the work programme of the United Nations Development Group Working Group on Programming Issues. As yet, work had not started, nor had a mechanism been set up for tackling it. The representative of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) offered to help facilitate linkages between the High-level Committee on Programmes and the Development Group on climate change, in her capacity as Vice-chairman of the Development Group. It was further suggested that a way should be found to include the United Nations country teams. Members of the High-level Committee noted that it was important to remain aware of problems that some States had with their National Adaptation Plan of Action and of concerns that working climate change into the United Nations Development Assistance Framework could diminish international commitment to development.

E. Next steps

15. **The Committee agreed to take the following actions, aiming to review the results at its sixteenth regular session, in September 2008:**

(a) **The working groups on focus and cross-cutting areas, with their respective conveners, will elaborate further on workplans, with an emphasis on substantive delivery in line with the established timetable;**

(b) **The CEB secretariat will compile a list of focal points among the conveners of the focus and cross-cutting areas, which will be circulated to members of the High-level Committee on Programmes to facilitate contact;**

(c) **Efforts will continue to coordinate relevant work between the High-level Committee on Programmes and the United Nations Development Group, with the latter focusing on country-level delivery;**

(d) **Efforts will continue under the High-level Committee on Programmes working group led by the Vice-chairman to better define work and deliverables within the adaptation area, in light of the discussion in the Committee;**

(e) **Development of the online inventory will proceed in accordance with the timetable presented to the High-level Committee on Programmes.**

16. **It was envisaged that revised workplans in the focus and cross-cutting areas would be submitted to the secretariat of the High-level Committee on Programmes by the end of July 2008, for consideration at a meeting of the High-level Committee working group in mid-August. These would then be finalized for review by the High-level Committee at its sixteenth regular session**

and subsequent submission to the CEB at its session in autumn 2008. Coordination meetings of working groups on focus and cross-cutting areas would be held as required, including on the sidelines of the sessions of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to be held in Accra from 21 to 27 August 2008.

III. Global food crisis

17. The Chairman recalled the discussion held by CEB at its retreat in April 2008, resulting in a communiqué (CEB/2008/1, annex) that identified short-, medium- and long-term measures to address the food crisis. CEB had also agreed to the establishment under the leadership of the Secretary-General of a High-level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis. He noted that the United Nations system stood on solid achievements that should energize its future work on food security.

18 The Deputy Coordinator of the High-level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis briefed the Committee on developments since the CEB meeting. He noted that the compounding effects of the energy and food crises would influence food prices for some time to come and that the underlying structural causes therefore needed to be addressed.

19. The first meeting of the High-level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis, on 12 May, had focused on setting the scene for the High-level Conference on World Food Security: the Challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy held in Rome from 3 to 5 June 2008, and on elements for a comprehensive framework for action. Other issues raised during the meeting included consideration of the evolution of the crisis, how to involve the private sector in addressing its consequences, the provision of assistance to poor farmers and the threat that the crisis posed to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goal of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger. A second meeting of the Task Force, on 28 May, had focused on preparations for the Rome conference and on a document setting out elements of a comprehensive framework for action. At its third meeting, on 24 June 2008, the Task Force addressed the outcome of the Rome conference and preparations for the upcoming Group of Eight meeting in Hokkaido, Japan. While the Task Force had initially held meetings every two to four weeks, the frequency was expected to decrease over time. There was as yet no set time frame for how long the Task Force would be in existence.

20. The Deputy Coordinator High-level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis noted that the comprehensive framework for action consisted of three sections, providing (a) a contextual analysis; (b) a plan of action for addressing immediate and long-term policy issues; and (c) elements for implementation of the framework at the local and national levels. While some outstanding issues remained to be addressed, it was envisioned that the framework would be finalized shortly. The framework did not imply a top-down programme to be implemented by the United Nations system, but rather described necessary actions to be taken over a number of years. A results-oriented tracking system was vital for the Task Force to be able to assist States, such as Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Haiti and Senegal. The Task Force also sought to reinvigorate existing processes, as well as to increase the involvement of the United Nations system with the private sector and non-governmental organizations, in particular by working through the resident

coordinator and United Nations country teams. The Task Force was accountable to CEB, as well as to Member States through the governing bodies of CEB member organizations.

21. The Assistant Director-General of FAO and Deputy Chair of the United Nations Development Group gave a briefing on the High-level Conference on World Food Security. The idea of the Conference had been conceived a year earlier to focus on food security in the context of climate change and bioenergy. As reflected in the Declaration adopted at the conference, the discussion, in addition to the comprehensive framework for action, had led to progress in several key policy areas, including addressing the challenge that climate change posed to food production systems and establishing agricultural systems and sustainable forest management practices to moderate the effects on climate change. The conference had further nuanced the consideration of biofuels and underscored the importance of the work of FAO in assisting farmers with inputs and technical assistance to increase agricultural production. The discussions of Member States had stalled, however, with regard to trade-related issues, and it was hoped that the revitalization of the discussions in the World Trade Organization would help address outstanding concerns.

22. The discussion in the Committee that followed centred on the support that the High-level Committee on Programmes could provide to furthering the response of the United Nations system to the food crisis. It was suggested that it would be worth reviewing the comprehensive framework for action to identify specific areas where the High-level Committee could add value at the global level, similar to what the United Nations Development Group was doing at the country level. Several members, however, questioned whether the High-level Committee had a major role to play, given the focus of the High-level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis and the role of the Development Group. It was pointed out that overlaps between the food crisis and the climate change architectures should be avoided and, in that regard, it was suggested that subsidies for food crops grown to produce biofuels could be addressed as part of the climate change adaptation agenda. Clarifications were further sought on the potential contribution of the Task Force to raising food production in the long run, as well as on possible causes of the rapid increase in global food prices. The point was made, moreover, that job creation, social protection and social safety nets should be part of the response to the crisis.

23. In addressing these comments, the Assistant Director-General recalled that the paper entitled "High food prices: impact and recommendations" that FAO, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and WFP had prepared for the CEB spring 2008 retreat had provided several reasons for the rise in food prices, including soaring energy prices, increased consumption of meat, weather conditions in food-producing countries such as Argentina and Australia, the effects of biofuels and underinvestment in infrastructure and in the agricultural sector.

24. The Deputy Coordinator of the High-level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis welcomed the suggestion to include job creation as an element of the response to the challenge posed by the rise in food prices and noted that the Task Force was open to participation by all United Nations system organizations. He outlined four components of a pragmatic approach to the crisis: (a) moulding (similar to what had been done in the coordinated response to avian influenza, it was suggested that organizational structures be moulded to fold into the problem rather than to try to change the problem to fit existing structures); (b) blending capacities

(while organizations could add much value individually, blending their capacities would go even further); (c) bringing the private sector and non-governmental organizations aboard (collaborating with civil society would create ripple effects and raise the bar to a higher level); and (d) keeping a watchful eye on policy (the High-level Committee on Programmes could play an important role in that regard by reviewing policy linkages between issues such as climate change and global food prices, as well as food production and physical malnutrition).

25. **The Committee agreed to revert to a discussion of the issue of the global food crisis in the light of the revised comprehensive framework for action and of such preparations as may be required for the autumn 2008 session of CEB.**

IV. Working methods and future work programme of the High-level Committee on Programmes

26. The Chairman introduced the paper on the working methods and future work programme of the High-level Committee on Programmes, which contained draft revised terms of reference for the Committee and a first draft of a workplan for 2008-2010. He recalled that, at its fifteenth session, HLCP had agreed to revert at the July intersessional meeting to a discussion of the Committee's role, functioning, working methods and future work programme, based on a rational division of labour among the three high-level committees under CEB.

27. Given the limited time available for a full discussion, the Chairman sought agreement from Committee members to the methods of work that had been tabled at the previous session of the High-level Committee on Programmes, as contained in the paper entitled "Review of the procedures and working methods of the High-level Committee on Programmes". He proposed that the Committee should provide the CEB secretariat with specific comments and suggestions on the draft terms of reference and a first draft of a workplan, with the aim of finalizing the discussion at the next session of the High-level Committee in September.

28. During the ensuing discussion, it was pointed out that the draft revised terms of reference could be recast along the lines of the two key functions of the High-level Committee on Programmes: (a) system-wide follow-up of intergovernmental decisions; and (b) scanning and identifying emerging issues requiring a system-wide response (such as the global food crisis). It followed that the workplan of the High-level Committee should be articulated in the context of an approach based on results. The Committee should address the programme dimensions of a strategic issue to enable the United Nations system to act on the issue in a coherent and coordinated manner. It was important for the three high-level committees to work together and to sequence issues properly. The CEB secretariat had begun a process of internal consultations to ensure an alignment of the agendas of the three Committees and the first meeting of the chairmen and co-chairmen was to take place at the conclusion of the current intersessional meeting.

29. **The Committee agreed to endorse the working methods for the High-level Committee on Programmes, as set out in the paper on its procedures and working methods and to send comments to the CEB secretariat on the draft revised terms of reference and workplan, with an aim to endorse both in September 2008.**

Annex I

Agenda of the High-level Committee on Programmes at its intersessional meeting held in New York on 1 July 2008

1. Adoption of the agenda
2. Climate change.
3. Global food crisis.
4. Working methods and future work programme of the High-level Committee on Programmes.

Annex II

Focus and cross-cutting areas of United Nations system coordinated work on climate change, with convening agencies[a]

A. Focus areas

- **Adaptation**

Convener: High-level Committee on Programmes working group on climate change

- **Capacity-building**

Conveners: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

- **Finance (mitigation, adaptation)**

Conveners: World Bank, UNDP

- **Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation**

Conveners: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, UNDP, UNEP

- **Technology transfer**

Conveners: United Nations Industrial Development Organization, Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat

B. Cross-cutting areas

- **Science, assessment, monitoring and early warning**

Conveners: World Meteorological Organization, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

- **Supporting global, regional and national action**

Conveners: Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Regional Commissions, UNDP

- **Public awareness**

Conveners: United Nations Climate Group, UNEP

- **Climate neutral United Nations**

Convener: UNEP

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[a] As specified in CEB decision of 28 April 2008 and the Secretary-General's follow-up letter of 30 May 2008.